



## *“Click It or Ticket.”*

*During FY03 ACC has experienced 24 motor vehicle fatalities. Combined with alcohol and speed, lack of seat belt use is still a major factor in these mishaps. Lack of seat belt use was directly associated with 5 of our 16 four-wheel motor vehicle mishaps. Because seat belt utilization is the key to saving lives, the Air Force is supporting the National Law Enforcement campaign “Click It or Ticket.” This campaign emphasizes seat belt utilization nationally to reduce the senseless lives lost in accidents.*

# Mirror

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**T**ired of being told you will die if you don't use your seat belt? Maybe it's time we focus more on the reality of what happens to those who don't wear their seat belts, survive, and are “treated and released.” My pre-military days training as a paramedic taught me quickly that being released often meant those folks were actually leaving to go have major dental or facial reconstruction done.

Let's face it; most of us have not died — yet — so we're unaware of the suffering that will be felt by our family, friends, and coworkers. We have, however, made a trip or two to the dentist. We know all too well the exhilarating sound of a high-speed drill, not being able to feel our lips or jaw, and the trickling of water down our necks — all while trying to answer those dentist's questions with a mouth full of instruments and hands. If you think having a tooth filled or a root canal is traumatic, imagine what kind of surgery is required to replace your teeth after they have been removed by your steering wheel!

Here's a typical scenario. You just need to do a couple of short errands, so you don't feel it is necessary to buckle up. You're at a stoplight and reach over to change the CD when WHAM — some idiot that has been drinking slams into the back of your car. The force of impact immediately sends you into the car in front of you. After your car stops, inertia keeps you moving forward until the steering wheel or windshield stops you — usually face first. You're pretty lucky because the impact wasn't enough to hurdle you through the windshield and onto the hood! Best of all, you're alive and “walk away” with a few missing teeth and some facial lacerations.

Most of us take the time each day to brush and floss our teeth, trying to reduce our trips to the dentist. So why can't we take a second or two to latch our seat belts? I know we all are concerned about our appearances. Some even worry that their seat belts will wrinkle their clothes. But will a few wrinkles really matter if the alternative is having false teeth anchored into

your jawbone or stitches across your face to piece it back together? People do die from not wearing their seat belts, but hundreds more are injured in horrible ways. These injuries not only cost the Air Force manpower and dollars, they also result in long-term physical and psychological damage. Try not to become one of these statistics; wear your seat belt. Maybe my short poem will help to motivate you ...

**Mirror, Mirror on the wall  
Who's the fairest of them all?  
The one who lacks wisdom in haste  
Or the one who's smiling —  
teeth held with paste?**

**Mirror, Mirror on the wall  
Who's the prettiest of them all?  
Someday those stitches will go away  
But those facial scars  
will forever stay.**

**Mirror, Mirror on the wall  
I no longer look like that  
picture in the hall.  
All I had to do was take a  
moment to click my seat belt on  
Then the face I once knew  
would not be gone.**

The next time you get in a car and choose not to buckle up, look ahead ... what's going to stop you now? If you think a deploying airbag will save you, think again. An airbag can cause more injury than the crash itself if you are too close when it deploys. For more information on the safety of airbags, visit [www.highwaysafety.org/safety\\_facts/quanda/airbags.htm#2](http://www.highwaysafety.org/safety_facts/quanda/airbags.htm#2). New technology is great, but nothing has been developed yet that will fully replace the safety our seat belts provide. Until that happens, don't have any regrets — always wear your seat belt. ▶